

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**4 MARCH 2020**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor K. Procter (in the Chair).

Councillor C.H. Churchill (Vice-Chair), Councillor Miss L. Blackburn, Councillor G. Coggins, Councillor B. Hartley, Councillor D. Jarman, Councillor J. Newgrosh, Councillor P. Myers, Councillor L. Walsh, Councillor D. Western, Mr. C.E.J. Griffiths, Mr R. Brown, Mr A. Rudden and Mr M. Whiting.

#### In attendance

Jane Le Fevre

Monitoring Officer

Alexander Murray

Governance Officer

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr. S. Carr and Mr. D. Goodman.

### **12. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

### **13. TRAFFORD'S RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS AREAS OF BEST PRACTICE**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report to the Committee. The Committee were asked to go through each document that had been included within the agenda for their consideration and to put forward any amendments. All of the changes being proposed had been highlighted within the agenda pack.

The Committee went through each of the documents and proposed amendments to be made prior to them being agreed or submitted to Council. The proposed amendments included that the definition of harassment be updated to cover physical contact, that the cross referencing within the code of conduct be updated, and that the wording within the two stage test be updated so it was clear that anyone could make a complaint not just Trafford residents.

The Committee discussed section 8d of the Code of Conduct with regards to what comply meant and whether Members would be expected to incriminate themselves. The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that it would be judged on a case by case basis dependent upon the balance of the Subject Councillor's requirements to cooperate set against their rights to not incriminate themselves. Councillor Hartley added that it should only apply to a councillor not to incriminate themselves if it came to criminal offence and requested that consideration be given to adding "without a reasonable reason" to the wording.

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RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Monitoring Officer considers a revision to section 8d of the Code of Conduct.
- 2) That following the amendments proposed by the Committee all documents be agreed for implementation or submission to Council.

**14. CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report that had been circulated with the agenda. The Committee were informed that this was a piece of work that the LGA were doing that tied into the creation of a new model code of conduct as recommended by the Committee for Standards in Public Life. Councillor Coggins had attended events at the LGA conference and was amazed at the amount of stress and the issues that Councillors faced across the country.

The Independent Person noted that at a previous meeting of the Committee they had spoken about the issue of Councillors receiving intimidating post at their home and asked if removing Councillor's home addresses was something that the Council could put forward to the LGA. The Monitoring Officer responded that there were powers within the current system to remove addresses from the public register with good reason but not a blanket ban. Councillor Hartley agreed with the suggestion of the Independent Person as he had an incident at his address and, while his address could now be removed he was concerned that people already knew his address.

Councillor Blackburn asked whether they had to have their address listed in their register of interests. The Monitoring Officer responded that Councillors did have the properties owned listed which would include their home. This was listed for transparency with regards to pecuniary interests which could affect a Councillor's decisions. These could be removed but only if a sufficient reason for not publishing the information was provided.

Councillor Jarman asked whether it would be worth sending out questions to all Councillors to gather their responses and let them know that they can respond directly as well. The Monitoring Officer responded that the Council had recognised the issue and training was provided for Councillors but the Council could look into running a short survey among Councillors.

The Monitoring Officer drew the Committee's attention to the timetable for the work and noted that there would be more opportunities for consultation following the publishing of the model code of conduct.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee note the report.
- 2) That the Committee's comments be noted for inclusion as the work progressed.

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**15. MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Monitoring Officer gave a verbal update to the Committee on the Council's standards since the last meeting. There had been no new complaints since January and the one outstanding complaint had been discussed with the independent person and it did not seem as though it would require a formal investigation.

The constitutional changes that had come to the Standards Committee would go to the Annual Council meeting as part of the constitutional changes rather than be listed as items of business for the Council meeting in March.

Training had been provided to Councillors throughout the year and in house training had been identified to be delivered following the elections.

RESOLVED: That update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 7.48 pm

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